

PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

PROGRAM:

People's Counsel

PROGRAM ELEMENT:

PROGRAM MISSION:

To represent the public interest in land use hearings and to ensure that all relevant zoning and planning issues are fairly presented and addressed in order to achieve balanced records upon which sound land use decisions can be made, to provide technical assistance to residents and citizen associations to secure their effective participation in the County's land use process, and to promote public understanding of and confidence in that process

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES SUPPORTED:

- Encourage and facilitate public participation in government
- Ensure that the public interest is represented in land use cases
- Promote citizen understanding of the County's land use control processes
- Provide open, accessible, responsive government
- Increase public confidence in government processes and services

PROGRAM MEASURES^a

PROGRAM MEASURES ^a	FY03 ACTUAL	FY04 ACTUAL	FY05 ACTUAL	FY06 BUDGET	FY07 CE REC
<u>Outcomes/Results:</u>					
Percentage of persons and groups assisted by the People's Counsel					
who report that the People's Counsel: ^b					
- Helped them participate effectively in the County's land use process ^c	NA	NA	NA	NA	TBD
- Increased their understanding of the land use process ^c	NA	NA	NA	NA	TBD
- Increased their understanding of the specific issues involved ^c	NA	NA	NA	NA	TBD
Number of successful mediations	2	3	0	NA	3
Percentage of attempted mediations that were successful	13	50	0	NA	100

Service Quality:

Percentage of persons and groups assisted by the People's Counsel

who were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with:^b

- The technical assistance provide by the People's Counsel
- The clarity of the information/advice provided
- The thoroughness and completeness of the information/advice provided

Efficiency:

Average cost per hearing participated in by the People's Counsel (\$)	1,842	1,873	1,815	NA	2,336
Average cost per instance of technical assistance provided (\$)	194	99	61	NA	97

Workload/Outputs:

Instances of technical assistance provided ^d	1,071	1,889	3,140	NA	2,400
Hearings participated in by the People's Counsel	80	48	61	NA	55
- Special exceptions	22	37	31	NA	30
- Rezonings	10	13	11	NA	12
- Site plans	0	1	0	NA	1
- Subdivision plans	1	1	3	NA	2
- Variances	0	0	0	NA	0
TOTAL hearings participated in	113	100	106	NA	100
Mediation sessions undertaken	16	6	3	NA	3
Presentations to civic associations and other community groups	26	43	41	NA	NA

Inputs:

Expenditures (\$000)	208,166	187,254	192,339	222,160	233,570
Workyears	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8

Notes:

^aThis is a new program measures display, and many of the measures shown are new. Because program measures were not prepared by the People's Counsel for FY06, there are no performance targets under the FY06 Budget column.

^bTo be based on a survey that will be provided to persons and groups who have contacted or otherwise been involved with the People's Counsel, starting in FY07.

^cThe percentage shown will be based on those survey respondents who replied "to some extent" or "to a great extent" to the relevant question.

d. "Technical assistance" involves help in understanding how the process works, the regulations that are the basis for a decision, and how to effectively participate in the hearing.

EXPLANATION:

The Office of the People's Counsel was established in 1999 to provide technical assistance to citizens and citizens associations in order to promote an understanding of the County's land use processes and to ensure effective citizen participation in hearings on rezonings, special exceptions, variances, and subdivision and site plans. The People's Counsel can actively participate in hearings before the Board of Appeals, the Hearing Examiner, and the Planning Board. When participating in a hearing, the People's Counsel is a party of record and can make motions, introduce evidence, call and cross-examine witnesses, and make arguments warranted by law and evidence.

The Office also advises residents and citizens' associations on how to most effectively present their issues when appearing in land use hearings conducted by the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings, the Board of Appeals, and the Montgomery County Planning Board. The Office undertakes mediations of land use disputes and acts as a clearing house to direct the public to the appropriate government agencies to provide the information or assistance needed.

PROGRAM PARTNERS IN SUPPORT OF OUTCOMES: County Council, Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings, Board of Appeals, Montgomery County Planning Board, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission staff, Department of Permitting Services, Office of the County Attorney.

MAJOR RELATED PLANS AND GUIDELINES: Section 1A-204 and Section 2-150 of the Montgomery County Code.